

The Influence of Gender Stereotype and Attitudes on Hiring Decisions in the Lebanese Workplace

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Abstract

This study examines gender stereotype in employment in Lebanese firms. Attitudes towards women, social dominance orientation and demographic characteristics of Recruitment Decision Maker (RDM) can have a significant impact on hiring decisions toward women in Lebanon and Middle Eastern societies. This study considers each of these and determines their impact on the choice of employment when candidates' qualifications are identical with the exception of gender. Data was collected from a survey conducted on managers in different Lebanese firms. Results showed that the gender of the Recruitment Decision Maker affects the hiring decisions when choosing between two candidates of different gender. Furthermore, a significant relationship between the attitude toward women and the hiring selection between male and female has also been noted. We have also detected stereotyping attitudes toward job types where males are considered more favorable for certain job profiles.

Keywords: Gender stereotype, employment, Lebanese firms, attitudes, women, recruitment, hiring selection, decision making.

Introduction

While gender differences in the workplace have reduced over the years, studies shows gender discrimination in employment decisions continue to exist (Reskin, 1999; Sandico & Kleiner, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Firth (1982) found a significant degree of discrimination against women candidates, especially those who were members of minorities or those who were married with children. Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke (1999) found that both men and women preferred to hire a male rather than female job applicant; even if the woman had the same qualifications. They both reported that the male job applicants were perceived to have better qualifications than the female job applicant. In addition, it was noticed that the worldwide rate of entrepreneurial men is much higher than women (Kelley et al., 2011) and, furthermore, entrepreneurship is associated with men and masculinity (Greene et al., 2011; Gupta et al., 2009). Males are more likely to be preferred for certain types of jobs related to entrepreneurship (Gupta and Turban, 2012).

Attitudes toward women are highly influenced by the national cultural framework. In some Middle Eastern countries, the role of women in society is determined by religious values, especially in Islam communities. Islamic values and patriarchy have a profound impact on women's participation in the Arab Society; in most of the Middle East countries which are governed by different degrees of Islamic Sharia (Karm, 1996; Kazemi, 2000). Some researchers found that specific Quranic injunctions are difficult to combinewith the concept of gender equality (Karmi, 1996; Kazemi, 2000), since most Arab societies draw heavily on religion to govern the employment trends for women.

Lebanon is a pluralistic nation; it is a small Arab country with a population of 4 million and consists of more than 17 distinct religious sects with Christianity and Islam as the dominant religions. Political and community life are highly influenced by religious values. It is well remarked that Lebanon is one of the Arab countries that have enabled women to take responsibilities outside the traditional home and childcare roles. The common belief that Lebanese women have always enjoyed freedom and rights does not reflect the full image. The Lebanese jurisdiction leaves women unprotected; for example, women cannot pass on her nationality to her husband or children (Victoria Stamadianou, 2012). In most Lebanese regions men remain committed to the ideology of domesticity and prefer to keep women at home handling traditional roles and responsibilities (Victoria Stamadianou, 2012). However, women remain significantly under-represented in the Lebanese labor market with Lebanon ranking 116 out of 134 countries in the world in terms of gender inequality (Torres Tailfer, 2010). But compared to the Arab region, Lebanon is far better and was the first country to give women the right to vote (Victoria Stamadianou, 2012).

A lot of studies and reports can be found on discrimination toward Lebanese woman, but we could not identify scientific research on the impact of these complicated social issue on hiring decisions in Lebanese firms. More specifically, we address the following research questions: Is a Lebanese firm's hiring decision of choosing between man and woman with equal qualifications influenced by the gender of the candidate? To what extent do attitude, social dominance orientation and demographic characteristics of the recruitment decision maker have an impact on hiring decision?

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on a conceptual framework considering three main concepts: attitude toward women, demographic characteristics of the RDM and social dominance orientation.

Attitude toward Women

Attitude is commonly defined as a stable system of beliefs regarding some objects and leading to an evaluation of such object with certain level of favor or disfavor (Penguin Dictionary of Sociology, 2006).

Attitudes toward Woman in the American Culture

Historically, in the American culture, the activities of women were limited to domesticity. In the early 1900s, almost all working women were employed in occupations that are popularly regarded as woman's work (Chafe, 1978; Gregory, 2001). In 1930, 30 % of female workers did clerical work, like stenography and typing, which became almost entirely regarded as woman's work (Chafe, 1978). In 1940, over 75% of all working females were in jobs that employed less than 1% of males (Chafe, 1978). During the World War II, women were encouraged to join the labor force for industrial and service jobs to support the war effort and because men were required for military actions. In the 1960s, women became part of the workforce (Gregory, 2001; Rowland, 2004). In 1970, women's participation in the labor force had increased to 43% as per the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2007b). Nowadays, attitudes toward the role of women in the workplace have become more liberalized, aiming for egalitarian attitudes (Lueptow et al., 2001:5).

Attitude toward Woman in the Lebanese Context

It is well remarked that Lebanon is one of the Arab countries which has enabled women to take responsibilities outside the traditional home and childcare roles. This is because Lebanon has been always more open to Western countries and values. Also, the migration of men to Gulf countries, Europe and North America between 1970s and 1990s, caused a shortage in the male workforce. After the civil war in 1990s, economic changes required that women participated more actively in the development of the country. Thus, during the last decades, considerable attention has been accorded to the importance of the role of women in building the Lebanese society, but no studies have documented the presence of discriminatory attitudes toward women in Lebanese Work place.

A statistic by the Lebanese Bankers Association indicates that only 19 percent of general managers or assistant GM in banks are women, which is very low since 90 percent of the workforce in banks are women (Eid, 2002). In addition to the low level of women participation in the workplace, especially in managerial positions, Lebanese women's participation in the public life remains incremental. Only 4 percent of the Lebanese deputies are women for example (Sha'rani 2004).

The discriminatory attitude toward women is mainly noticeable in the recruitment decisions; Woodhams & Lupton, (2006a) studied the adoption of policies of equal opportunities according to gender in SMEs in the UK, where it has shown that there is a weak commitment with formal equality policies. It noticed a lack of awareness and respect for good and fair practices and many organizations actively exert direct and indirect discrimination (Woodhams, Lupton, & Raydon-Rennie, 2004:12).

This attitude toward women was adopted as a variable to test its impact on the hiring decisions (WHO). Hiring procedures enable decision-makers to favor individuals of their own sex, ethnicity, race, and so on (Kanter, 1977). From this perspective, a RDM uses a certain type of mental discrimination to categorize jobs and classify jobseekers by creating mental patterns like gender-based schema or race-based schema ... in order to guide the information (Perry et al., 1994).

Based on the previously mentioned literature and the reported figures on Lebanon, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Hiring women is affected by the attitude of the decision-maker toward women.

Demographic Characteristics

The personal characteristics of the recruitment decision-maker, such as their gender, religion, nationality, age, educational level, may either consciously or unconsciously influence the way they see personal characteristics of others (Powell & Butterfield, 2002). Stereotyping is generally suspected to be related to the combination of the personality traits within social groups, and may also include professions associated with minorities, men, and women (Jackson et al., 2001). Recruitment managers also use myth legitimization as a way to justify their negative attitudes toward others (Powell & Butterfield, 2002). A study revealed that recruitment managers with negative attitudes toward black people are more confident to hire black applicants for low-status jobs and white applicants for high positions (Stewart & Perlow, 2001). In addition, because some recruitment managers apply stereotypes to women, they may rate female less favorably than male.

Recruitment Decision-Makers may be influenced by their own social identities when taking hiring decisions or

promotions (Reskin, 1999). Therefore, recruitment managers may seek to recruit or promote individuals they consider similar to themselves in terms of gender, age, race (Powell & Butterfield, 2002). A study conducted by Rand and Wexley (1975) on the “similar to me” effect in job interviews, has found that when recruitment managers were present with biographical similar applicants, they evaluated those applicants as more suitable for the job than applicants biographically dissimilar. Further study on similarity effects has shown that the evaluation of the applicant is positively correlated to the assessor’s perceptions of similarity with the candidate (Elsass & Graves, 1997). Graves and Powell (1996) have found that female recruitment raters felt that their interviews with female applicants were better than those with men and consequently rated females more favorably.

H2: Employment selection will not be affected by the recruitment decision maker’s demographic characteristics.

H₂ a: Employment selection will not be affected by the recruitment decision maker’s gender.

H₂ b: Employment selection will not be affected by the recruitment decision maker’s age.

H₂ c: Employment selection will not be affected by the recruitment decision maker’s level of education.

Social Dominance Orientation

The acceptance of the ideologies that legitimize inequality and unequal behavior is partly derived from the general desire of the people for group-based dominance, which is known as “Social Dominance Orientation” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This psychological direction is important for understanding individual differences in attitudes and socio-political behaviors. Members of dominant groups are more likely to have anti-egalitarian beliefs (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius et al, 2004.); such people have a higher degree of social dominance orientation and have an incentive to maintain their position as dominant over their subordinates (Rubin & Hewstone, 2004).

The below hypotheses were proposed:

H3: Hiring decisions of women is negatively correlated with the social dominance orientation.

Methods and Measurement

To measure the RDM’s attitude toward women, a set of 8 questions has been created to measure the gender-role-beliefs. These questions were selected from the work of R. L. Helmreich, J. T. Spence, and R. H. (1972–1980) on Sex-Role Attitudes. Answers are provided through a Likert scale questionnaire measuring the level of agreement on each item where 1 is strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree (see appendix).

Ten questions were developed to measure participants’ social dominance orientation if respondents are more likely to share equal resources and opportunities between each other or not. The questions were selected from F. Pratto, J. Sidanius, and L. M. Stallworth, (1994) studies on Social Dominance Orientation and Personality Variable Predicting Social and Political Attitudes (See appendix B). The demographic characteristics of the RDM may also affect the hiring decision. A questionnaire was developed to collect several demographic variables from the participants such as age, gender, educational level, and job position (see appendix A).

In addition to the three questionnaires, four CVs with equal qualifications, 2 applying for the financial manager position and two of HR specialist position, were included in the survey to analyze respondents’ attitude toward women. CVs for every position are similar in terms of education, years of experience and jobs tasks; only the difference is the gender of the candidates. The same case was used for the “Financial Manager” position in order to further evaluate the selection for two different types of job. The CVs were extracted from resume free samples by Job Bank USA.

The data collected from a sample of 52 respondents, which was analyzed via SPSS, descriptive statistics, two-independent sample T test (to make a comparison between 2 groups) and Chi-Square test (to discover the relationship between 2 variables) were applied.

The questionnaire was distributed in various Lebanese organizations, targeting the heads of departments who have direct influence on hiring decisions. The organizations are located in different regions in Lebanon and are from different business backgrounds (retail companies, shipping agencies, clearing agencies, designers...). 52 respondents filled out the questionnaire, 28 male respondents and 24 female respondents.

Findings and Results

Attitudes toward Women

Table 3 and 4 provides an overview of the respondents’ attitudes toward women. The results support H1, hiring decisions are affected by a decision-maker’s attitude toward women. 72% of the respondents selected the male applicant for the financial manager position, and 74% of the respondents chose the female applicant for the HR position. In the same perspective of Gupta and Turban (2012), it appeared that female candidates are more likely preferred for the HR position, while male candidates for the financial manager position. The T-test in table 3

confirms the relation between attitudes toward women and choosing between genders for financial manager position, therefore a significant difference between respondents with attitudes toward women “equality” and “inequality with the hiring decision for the Financial Manager position is well noticed. Table 4 shows the relation between respondents’ attitudes toward women and selecting applicant for senior HR position. A significant difference between equal attitude toward women and unequal attitude with the hiring decision for the HR Expert position is noticed.

Table 3:
 Independent Sample T test ATW and Financial Manager

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ATW.EQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	1.823	.185	3.829	38	.000	.75549	.19731	.35605	1.15492
	Equal variances not assumed			4.312	23.494	.000	.75549	.17520	.39348	1.11749
ATW.INEQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	.000	.984	-2.206	38	.034	-.58934	.26716	-1.13018	-.04850
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.358	20.813	.028	-.58934	.24990	-1.10933	-.06935

Table 4: Independent Sample T test ATW and Senior HR

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ATW.EQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	2.058	.160	3.462	37	.001	.73966	.21364	.30679	1.17252
	Equal variances not assumed			2.910	12.186	.013	.73966	.25419	.18675	1.29256
ATW.INEQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	3.406	.073	-2.666	37	.011	-.72414	.27159	-1.27442	-.17385
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.259	12.300	.043	-.72414	.32061	-1.42081	-.02747

Demographic Characteristics

Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 demonstrate that all P value falls in non-critical regions; therefore one should reject the claim that there is a relation between the age of the respondent and selection between genders for both positions (Hypothesis 2). Concerning the educational level, also all Chi-Squares falls into the non-critical region and shows no relationship with the hiring decisions.

As for the gender of the RDM, tables 9 and 10 provide the results of chi square test for the Financial Manager Position employment selection according to RDM’s gender. From the value of Cramer’s V of 0.506, one can conclude that the relationship between gender of the RDM and the gender of the candidate should be regarded as very high and significant.

Table 11 shows the results of Chi-Square test for the Senior HR Specialist Position employment selection according to RDM’s Gender. The results indicate that there is no relationship between the employment selection for the senior HR and the gender of the RDM.

Table 5: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.524 ^a	6	.606
Likelihood Ratio	6.248	6	.396
Linear-by-Linear Association	.001	1	.971
N of Valid Cases	52		

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests 3

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.043 ^a	6	.235
Likelihood Ratio	10.227	6	.115
Linear-by-Linear Association	.038	1	.845
N of Valid Cases	52		

Table 7: Chi-Square Tests 4

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.331 ^a	2	.847
Likelihood Ratio	.329	2	.848
Linear-by-Linear Association	.284	1	.594
N of Valid Cases	52		

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests 5

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.057 ^a	2	.972
Likelihood Ratio	.057	2	.972
Linear-by-Linear Association	.004	1	.948
N of Valid Cases	52		

Table 9: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.318 ^a	2	.001
Likelihood Ratio	14.017	2	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.713	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	52		

Table 10: Symmetric Measures 1

	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal Phi	.506	.001
Cramer's V	.506	.001
N of Valid Cases	52	

Table 11: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.043 ^a	2	.132
Likelihood Ratio	4.280	2	.118
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.683	1	.055
N of Valid Cases	52		

Social Dominance Orientation

Social dominance orientation shows no relationship with the hiring selection when choosing between male and female applicants, even for different type of jobs as indicated in table 8 and 9. Two independent sample t tests were used to make the comparison between two groups (group with no social dominance orientation compared with group with high level of social dominance orientation; also, group with equal attitude toward women compared to group with negative attitude toward women).

Table 12: Independent Sample T Test Social Dominance Orientation and Financial Manager Position

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SDO.INEQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	.283	.598	-.538	38	.594	-.14859	.27606	-.70744	.41026
	Equal variances not assumed			-.594	22.388	.558	-.14859	.25013	-.66681	.36963
SDO.EQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	.267	.608	1.742	38	.090	.42633	.24473	-.06910	.92176
	Equal variances not assumed			1.890	21.521	.072	.42633	.22556	-.04205	.89471

Table 13: Independent sample T Test for Social Dominance Orientation and Senior HR

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
SDO.INEQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	.106	.746	-1.596	37	.119	-.42138	.26408	-.95645	.11369
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.622	16.151	.124	-.42138	.25972	-.97154	.12878
SDO.EQUALITY	Equal variances assumed	.001	.976	.884	37	.382	.22759	.25732	-.29380	.74898
	Equal variances not assumed			.897	16.088	.383	.22759	.25362	-.30983	.76501

Concluding Remarks

Based on the sample, the gender of the RDM affects his/her hiring decisions when choosing between male and female applicants; but the selection depends on the job type as found previously by Gupta and Turban in (2012). Since the questionnaire compared between HR position and financial position, it appeared that the HR is regarded better suited for females. In contrary, the financial manager position is regarded better suited for males. For the HR position even male respondents preferred the female candidate over the male candidate.

Also, the attitude toward women affects the hiring selections when choosing between two applicants from different gender. In addition, the results show that this variable is also affected by the job type as explained above.

Stereotyping in the job market according to gender can be a subject for future research; also religion of the respondents may be a key variable to test its relationship with the hiring selection according to gender.

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